

**Mad Bad or God? Mark 3:20-30**  
**Christ Church Huntingdon Sunday 29th September 2019**

**V27**

- Start with a Q: Do you believe in Evil?
  - And I mean real evil with a capital E?
  - Do you believe that there is a devil and forces of evil in the world?
  - I'm not talking about a man in red suit, pointy tail, holding trident.
  - Real spiritual enemy who we can't see but who is real and deadly.
    - We don't think much about him today, but perhaps if...
      - We were to stand at gates of Auschwitz 1.1M died<sup>1</sup>.
      - We were to read the report on Friday of 500 men and children as young as 5 being kept in chains in a torture house in Nigeria<sup>2</sup>, or
      - We were to look at the statistics that suicide in under 25s rose by 23.7% last year<sup>3</sup>
    - ...we might be more open to his existence.
  - Perhaps you have no problem with the idea of the devil: you know the power of evil in your own life or in your family.
    - A terrible addiction that it seems cannot be shifted.
    - Destructive behaviour that is ripping your family apart.
    - Negative thinking that is taking someone down down down into a deep pit of depression.
  - Satan feels like an impossibly strong figure who can't be shifted. He's like a drug dealer who takes over the house of a vulnerable adult, stays there illegally and who no-one can get rid of, and who no-one dares go near.
- Well this passage today is full of good news, because in it we discover that if you look carefully you will see that Jesus is wonderfully the one who can overcome Satan and evil.
- Let's get our bearings and then let's dive in.
  - It's a sandwich (Mark often uses these)
    - Scene 1: V20-21. **Family**
    - Scene 2: V22-30: **Teachers of the law**
    - Scene 3: v31-34 **Family**. [next week- special all age service]
      - The first 2 (today show negative response)
      - Third (All age next week) shows positive response.
- And I think we are going to find this passage excellent news as we look at Jesus, under the question "*Mad, or Bad, or God?*"
- Lets look first of all at v20-21.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auschwitz\\_concentration\\_camp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auschwitz_concentration_camp)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49850408>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/suicide-facts-and-figures/>

## 1) His family think he is mad v20-21

- V20
- We've seen the crowds flocking from all around to Jesus last week.
- And they are so numerous and so pressurising towards Jesus, that he can't even eat.
- V21
  - "This" - Could be they are hearing about the crowds.
  - May even be that "this" refers to the fact that he can't even eat.
    - That's interesting- he's getting in trouble for not eating
    - And across the page (2:18) he's in trouble for eating (for not fasting)!
  - Well, like families often do when they've had enough, they just want him out. Jesus' family go to take him away from the situation.
  - Saying he's out of his mind.
    - Now this comes as quite a shock for those (perhaps from a Catholic background) who have either been brought up to believe that Mary never had further children- we see them in v32. Or that Mary never got things wrong. We see here that she and her sons (in fact like most people in Mark's gospel) misunderstood Jesus, even though at other times in the gospels she can be a great example of devotion to us.
- They thought that he was out of his mind/ Beside himself.
- That's the first point today.
- Do you see that Mark is pressing on us the question of **IDENTITY**. Pause on this
- Who is Jesus?
- It will come again and again in this book.
  - On the lake: "who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him".
  - At Caesarea Philippi: Who do people say I am?
    - But what about you? Who do you say I am?
  - At the Cross; Surely this man was the Son of God.
    - **The big question of the book is who is Jesus.**
- When it comes to helping others grapple with Christianity, this is the question to ask.
  - What's your opinion of Jesus. Who do you think he is?
  - Not what does the church teach about gender, or suffering...
    - Those questions are important and there are answers.
    - But Christianity is Christ. so go for the jugular
    - **Who is Jesus?**
  - If you can get to grips with that, you get to the heart of Christianity.
- **And If you are new to church this morning, who do you say Jesus is?**
  - If your brother doesn't like church, at this stage, don't worry.
  - Who does he say Jesus is? That's what he needs to think about.

- **And if you are a Christian but you know there are times when you don't live the Christian life, or when you doubt whether it's all real.**
- You need to return with some cold light of day thinking to this Question.
  - Who, honestly, do I think Jesus is.
  - Is he just a figure of history, Is he a legend, or is he something else.
  - Here we see some say he's mad.
  - And actually that is one option to put on the table.
- Perhaps you have had the experience I have that when you say you're a Christian they look at you like you're slightly unhinged.
- Richard Dawkins who argued in his 2006 book that God is a delusion supported the statement that "if one person suffers from a delusion it is called insanity, but when many people suffer from a delusion it is called a religion".
- So the idea that Christianity is madness didn't end in the first century.
- But... can we really say that Jesus **himself** was mad.
  - Does Jesus show any signs of mental instability?
- There are times in his life when I think it's fair to say he faces mental anguish, or even depression- look at him in the garden of Gethsemane as his soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.
  - That's a help to us if we suffer in our mental health at different times.
- But is mental illness a reasonable option for Jesus overall identity?
  - He is the most sane person you have ever come across.
    - He spoke words of complete wisdom that have stood the test of time.
    - His 12 disciples who were with him night and day found him to be calm, reasonable and lucid.
    - And unlike every other great moral teacher, he actually walked his talk.
  - Are these the characteristics of a madman?
- **We're saying that we have to come to terms with who Jesus is. Is he Option 1, deluded? That's what his family thought, but I don't think it stacks up.**

Let's move onto the second group- the religious leaders, the teachers of the law, and to their opinion of Jesus' identity.

## **2) The teachers of the law think he is bad v22-29**

- That is to say they think that he is evil.
- You might remember the name Beelzebul or Beelzebub from Queen's song "Bohemian Rhapsody". It's another name for the Devil, the Lord of the flies. It's quite a rare and unusual Jewish name and therefore a good bit of eyewitness evidence that Mark is telling it as it was.
- But look at what they call him (v22) this is fascinating.
- The religious leaders, have already come down from HQ in Jerusalem, (which is a sign that the news is spreading)
  - And they are not denying that Jesus has incredible power to drive away evil spirits. But they reckon it's coming from Evil itself.
  - (It's worth noting that- the earliest enemies of Jesus didn't deny he was doing amazing things, they just denied where it came from)
  - They are not denying the fact of his power, but it's source.
  - They think that he is doing this powerful work with the help of the Devil himself.
- But there's a fundamental flaw. Their idea doesn't stack up.
  - And Jesus with his razor sharp thinking, asks v23 How can Satan drive out Satan,
  - and he exposes their thinking quickly with the help of a couple of 3 pictures or parables.
- The first parable is v24 V24. Kingdom.
  - It's good logic. Imagine The United Kingdom declared war on itself. IT wouldn't last long. (perhaps there's a warning there for our current parliamentary divisions!)
- And parable 2. A House, meaning a family or dynasty.
  - The House of Kennedy, or the House of Windsor or the House of Fraser!
  - Imagine if the family on the throne was killing each other- it's happened before, and that dynasty doesn't normally last long.
- V26 Jesus says what he means.
- It's ludicrous to suggest that Jesus is using the power of Satan to drive out Satan. Sub heading...Surely Satan fighting Satan.
  - Far more likely is to see what he's doing in terms of parable 3: verse 27. The verse we started with.
- ▲ Remember the picture of an evil drug dealer who has taken over the house of a vulnerable adult (it's called cuckooing). Perhaps he's even taken other people's belongings or family captive. And no-one has the strength or guts to go in and sort him out.
- **Well Jesus does v27**. And this is the big thing to grasp today.
- Jesus is plundering Satan's house- he's raiding his house to plunder or liberate all who have been taken captive. And the fact that Jesus is casting out demons is clear evidence that Jesus isn't working for Satan, but rather he's tied him up. Sub heading.

- In fact when Jesus died on the cross he dealt the decisive death blow to Satan, because the worst weapon that the Devil can use against us- our guilt- has been snapped in two. Because now we are forgiven, and Satan can do all he likes, but he has no ultimate weapon against us.
    - He's been tied up by the work of Christ.
    - What a wonderful thing.
  - Just pause on this.
  - Those destructive and addictive things that are ripping your life apart.
  - The guilt you carry around.
  - Jesus is the one who smashes Satan in two.
  - Come to Jesus.
    - Experience his liberation.
    - Know the freedom he brings
    - It will mean changes, but he will help you
    - Experience the power of his work in your life and your family.
  - And when you feel afraid or worried- come into the arms of Jesus, you will be safe with him.
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- Just 3 more verses before we close, and they are quite sobering, because Jesus hasn't finished with the religious leaders.
  - He wants to show that the attitude that they are showing is extremely serious.
  - V28. That's a wonderful promise.
    - You may have committed the worst kind of sins.
    - I met a pastor who had met an axe murderer. Literally.
    - He can be forgiven. Like Moses and David and Paul.
  - But v29-30.
    - These pharisees were ascribing the work of Jesus to evil.
    - And that's what the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is
  - Many Christians have been worried that they might have committed this sin. Many great Christians, including for a time John Bunyan from Bedford who wrote Pilgrims' Progress.
  - But this is not a sin a Christian can commit.
  - Because by definition, a Christian is someone who follows not rejects Jesus.
    - It's a settled continuous rejection of Jesus that ascribes his work to Satan and evil.
    - If you harden your heart into that position, you are rejecting Jesus as the saviour, and how can you be forgiven.
    - It's like drowning in the sea, and being thrown a lifejacket, but complaining that the life belt is evil, and you won't use it.
  - Feel free to talk more about this afterwards, or in Life Groups this week, but in short, those who are worried they have committed this sin, can be reassured.

- Well let's wrap things up.
  - It's a question of IDENTITY.
  - Who do people say Jesus is.
    - Some say Mad.
    - Others say Bad.
    - The only other option is **GOD**.
  - It's not in our passage, but it's where the NT is going, and I couldn't help closing with **CS Lewis' words**.
    - CS Lewis was a Cambridge professor in the 50s.
    - He was trying to challenge people who just thought that Jesus was a good teacher.
    - It's a common view today.
      - I don't mind Jesus
      - He was a good man
      - He had some interesting things today
      - But he wasn't anyone special
    - I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. **A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell.** You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. **You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.** ... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God<sup>4</sup>.
  - The full quote is on the sheet as you go out.
  - Who do you say Jesus is?
    - Be encouraged, he's not **mad**. He walked his talk.
    - And it doesn't make sense to see his work as that of the **Devil**, otherwise satan would be fighting satan.
    - Instead he's come to deal with evil- **God's Son**, (the stronger man) who can help you with the situations that you face this week.

Why don't we all turn to him personally now in a moment of quiet prayer, and commit to him the issues that we are facing right now, then Becca will lead us in prayer.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis%27s\\_trilemma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis%27s_trilemma)